

## ***Establishing a national surveillance steering committee***

### **Specific activity area being addressed by this action plan**

Establishing a core infrastructure – National Surveillance Steering Committee

### **Safeguarding review recommendations covered**

#2: Use a surveillance steering committee to provide guidance, priorities, feedback, and evaluation to the national surveillance system.

#14: Create partners and advocates for the national surveillance system by developing an understanding of its value with participants, users, and beneficiaries.

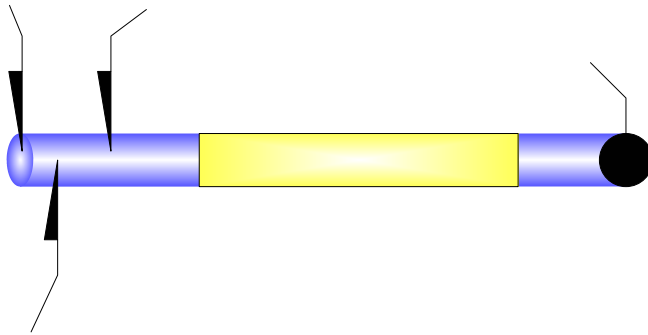
### **Issue group findings**

The national surveillance system issue group agrees with the safeguarding report that a steering or advisory committee is an important component of the national surveillance system. A steering committee is necessary to represent the interests of the broad spectrum of the animal health community. A steering committee will serve the key role of ensuring national surveillance system constituents' priorities are addressed and also communicating and promoting activities of the national surveillance system.

The development of a steering committee involves several sets of issues. The first is the purpose and the function of the committee. This is described in the Safeguarding review as providing an opportunity for input for surveillance needs and strategies, direction and priorities. This mechanism would also be ideal for disseminating information to stakeholders and building a national consensus on the approach to be followed. The second set of issues relates to organization and status. While the safeguarding report suggests the National Animal Health Emergency Management Steering Committee as a model, that committee has had approximately eight years to mature into its present form. The NAHEMS Steering Committee is managed with extensive VS and PPD staff support. The VSMT would need to be certain that support resources are also allocated to this effort. The issue group discussed the legal status of such a committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The NAHEMS Steering Committee experience may provide a policy and legal framework for the ongoing operations of the committee.

### **Proposed actions**

The key actions are shown in the diagram below. These actions are directly responsive to recommendation #2 and, by the establishment of the committee, set in place the relationships to achieve recommendation #14.



## Implementation plan

The steering committee will support the national surveillance coordinator by providing input on annual goals and the broad direction of the national surveillance system. The steering committee should focus initial activities on organizational issues. These issues include the mission, operational goals and logistical plans of the committee. A process for prioritizing surveillance goals should be developed early. Additional early activities of the steering committee include input on the common vision, and development of the National Surveillance Network.

## Tasks

**Step 1 Set charter** - Establish the purpose, membership and legal standing of the steering committee. Proposed purposes of the steering committee include:

- Provide input for the broad strategic direction for the national surveillance system,
- Provide input for annual surveillance goals,
- Review surveillance strategies,
- Build support among constituents for the national surveillance system, and
- Provide the communication link with elements of the national surveillance system.

Once the purpose of the committee has been established, the membership can be determined and may include representatives of the livestock and poultry industries, state animal health and wildlife agencies, diagnostic laboratory organizations, academic institutions, private practitioner organizations, relevant federal agencies, public health and consumer organizations. Guidance should be sought from APHIS legal staff to determine the legal status the committee. Given the need to have the steering committee function in sync with other external committees, such as the Secretary's Advisory Committees and existing national committees, this step is lead by the national surveillance coordinator with support from the Deputy Administrator.

**Step 2 Select members** - This step is also led by the national surveillance coordinator in consultation with the Deputy Administrator and leaders of the stakeholder groups that will be represented on the committee. Recognizing the critical role each member of the steering committee will play in the national surveillance system, and the importance of

**1. Set Charter:**  
**NSC, VS Deputy**  
**Administrator,**  
**legal staff,**

**3. Select date,**  
**objective,**  
**and agenda:**  
**NSC**

**2. Select**  
**members:**  
**NSC**

**4. Mon**  
**making**  
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this committee to the mission of APHIS, membership invitations should be extended by the APHIS Administrator.

**Step 3 Convene meeting to plan initial activities** - Establish the date, purpose, objectives and agenda of the first meeting of the steering committee. The national surveillance coordinator leads this action step, with the assistance of the national surveillance unit leader and those who will be providing support services to steering committee. Initial activities of the steering committee should include developing mission statement and committee operational processes and annual plans, developing communication channels with stakeholders, developing a prioritization process for establishing surveillance goals, and refining the national surveillance system common vision.

**Step 4 Monitor effectiveness** - Ensure that the steering committee functions as intended, that is, it provides a central place for input, dialogue and collaboration. The issue group notes that the NAHEMS Steering committee has developed a full set of activities that supplement those carried out by VS staff. A measure of the steering committee's success would be the degree to which those activities themselves lead to the improvement of national surveillance system. The assessment of the performance of the steering committee should be conducted by a third party, possibly through the cooperation of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

#### **Accountable individual/group**

The responsibility for this action plan belongs primarily with the national surveillance coordinator.

#### **Other key players**

Consultation, collaboration and support for some of the actions are noted above and include the Deputy Administrator, the national surveillance unit, PPD and VS support staff.

#### **Resources needed**

If the level of activity reaches that of the NAHEMS Steering Committee, one quarter of a staff year should be counted toward maintaining and supporting the work of the committee. A small annual budget for meeting logistics will also be needed. Travel for committee members is not included as APHIS typically does not pay travel costs for steering committee members. An estimate of annual budget is shown in table 1.

<b>NSSC annual budget</b>	
<b>resource</b>	<b>budget</b>
0.25 FTE GS7/9/11	\$10,000.00
meeting logistical support	\$5,000.00
<b>total</b>	<b>\$15,000.00</b>

Table 1.	
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### **Statutory and regulatory impacts**

There are no anticipated statutory or regulatory impacts associated with establishing the national surveillance steering committee.

### **Political sensitivities**

There may be some who question the appropriateness or need for a surveillance steering committee. Committees within national organizations such as USAHA may view the proposed steering committee as unnecessary or infringing on their responsibilities and authorities. Others may question the wisdom of establishing a group that may be perceived as directing VS surveillance activities. In order to avoid the issue of ‘directing activities’, it must be clear in the committee’s charter that the role of the committee is to be a source of input to decisions made by VS. The national surveillance coordinator must work with existing national committees, which may be concerned about redundancy, to negotiate the appropriate roles of, and relationships between, the proposed steering committee and existing committees.

### **Sequencing and Integration**

The steering committee action plan is a key initial action plan for developing the core infrastructure. Implementation should begin immediately although initial activities of the steering committee should be limited until the establishment of a national surveillance unit. The national surveillance unit can help to frame the input of the steering committee. Initial work on crafting the national surveillance system vision should be in process before implementation of the steering committee in order to avoid a different set of assumptions that is at odds with VS’ intent.

### **Partnering/cooperation/communication**

The steering committee is the key link to many elements of the national surveillance network. This action plan is intended to institutionalize relations with key partners in the National Surveillance System.

### **Expected outcome and performance indicators**

(Please see appendix A.)

### **Linkage to VS Strategic Plan**

The current strategic plan calls for increasing levels of interaction between VS and its partners. This action plan is intended to establish a high level of interaction with key partners.